

Town Government Study Committee 2014

Town Hall – Great Hall

November 5, 2014

Committee: Katherine L Babson Jr., Stanley Brooks, Rose Mary Donahue, Arthur J Goldberg, , Richard Page, Linda Perlmutter, Thomas Ulfelder

Also: Kathleen Nagle

Chair Babson called the meeting to order at 7:30 pm. She announced that the session was being taped for Broadcast by the Wellesley Channel. She asked if there was anyone present to address the committee. There was none.

The Committee heard reports of department interviews.

Linda Perlmutter – COA report is in review with COA

- COA has completed a strategic planning process
- Governing structure of COA is large and perhaps needs review to be effective in its current role with more programming
- TGSC could support COA efforts to look into its own structure
- COA has good relationship with Board of Health
- COA would like more responsiveness from executive director office

Linda Perlmutter – Veterans Services and Youth Commission

- Personality of the leadership seems to make things work well
- Veterans services has close relationship to office of executive director
- Youth Commission effective – Youth Director is effective
- Comment that if things aren't working well there is little recourse to fix it

Arthur Goldberg – Fair housing Committee – not currently functioning, perhaps could fold into Planning director responsibilities

Lee Brooks – ZBA

- ZBA statutory entity charged with decisions on zoning variance and special permitting
- Interacts regularly with Building Department and Planning
- Challenges with internally inconsistent Zoning bylaw (has been amended multiple times but not rewritten)
- Some inherent conflicts with Planning Board writing the ZBL and ZBA interpreting it in cases
- Major projects also have other permitting requirements and sometimes boards make conflicting decisions

- Suggestion to offer flowcharts for citizens/developers to understand how to conduct a permitting process – however complicated to standardize due to specifics of each project
- ZBA appointed by BOS, requires expertise in backgrounds, can be hard to fill positions; most members long tenure

Ann Marie Gross- DPW

- DPW is town “contractor” and engages with many departments
- DPW does “work for other” departments and uses allocation system to charge other departments for work done on capital projects and other activities; creates accountability and is quality check as “customer” departments must be satisfied with the work
- Prioritizes work for other requests informally- have regular meetings with departments that they do work for
- Departments can also use outside contractors, but usually use DPW.
- Business functions of DPW handled by other management positions and coordinated with Financial services
- DPW has internal performance metrics
- BPW typically stays at policy level and not interference with operations
- Suggested improvements
 - Monthly department head meetings to foster communications
 - Earlier budget guidelines to allow forecasting of resources
 - Interboard meetings allow more opportunity for cross-conversations

Rich Page – MLP

- Governed by state municipal power statutes MGL chapter 164
- Very independent of town
- Protective of customers as rate payers
- Actively managed to maximize efficiency for customers
- Voluntary cooperation with town departments (tax bills, traffic signals, fire alarms, fiber optics installation, energy savings through light fixture replacements)
- PIL to town \$1 million annually is voluntary

Page general comments

- Town should be looking at outcome driven analysis, process issues can slow delivery of services and decisionmaking down.
- Look at opportunities to enhance internal communications among departments
- Deemphasis on “turf” and more emphasis on outcomes for citizens

Arthur Goldberg – Housing Authority

- Controlled by state law chapter 121B
- Largely independent of town oversight
- Funded by state and rent paid by tenants

Rich Page- Schools

- Schools have recently reorganized administrative team along functional roles- specific authority of Director of finance and budget
- Interact with wide range of departments
- Would find it better if committee members took office at the beginning of fiscal year July 1 after ATM
- Suggestion to have joint budget presentation at ATM of superintendant and School committee
- See conflict where schools are driven by focus on educational outcomes and town is looking at financial impacts
- Budget timing challenge for schools because they don't have the best information at the time the budget needs to be developed (enrollment numbers are later and drive the budget process)
- Seek greater control over decisions about their building – collaboration and more involvement with FMD for input on design and maintenance decisions.

COMMITTEE BUSINESS

Plan for TMM feedback sessions- Gig and rich will develop discussion questions

- November 12 at 9:30 am Wakelin Room
- November 13 at 7:30 pm at Police station

November 18 7:00 pm Warren building – Kate Fitzpatrick, Need Town Manager

December 3 7:30 pm at Town Hall – Alice Peisch , Former Town Clerk and Current State Representative invited

December 6 9 am at Library- discuss priorities

December 9 7:00 pm with Marilyn Contreas DHCD – alternate forms of governance in Massachusetts

December 17 agenda TBA if needed

Interviews of benchmark communities – pairs of committee members to conduct interviews in person or conference call. Committee members who are able to make daytime commitments may be able to do

more of the interviews. Rosemary and Gig will prepare a common list of questions to guide interviews. Meetings to be completed by early January if possible.

Babson met with Advisory Committee earlier this evening to update them on progress. Suggested the need for continuation of the committee for another year before recommendations would be ready for presentation to ATM.

Adjourned at 9:45 pm.